



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

June 12, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

House Report 114-606, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2017; and House Report 115-237, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018; and House Report 115-750, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2019, request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) review current policies concerning reporting and data collection standards for severe allergic reactions aboard aircraft. The Joint Explanatory Statements accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, (“Act”), Pub. L. 115-31, direct the FAA to submit the results of the review to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations no later than 180 days after enactment of the Act. The FAA is pleased to provide in this letter the following report on allergic reactions aboard aircraft.

Allergic reactions occur when a person’s immune system inappropriately reacts to a substance that is harmless to most other people. Available data indicates that an allergic reaction onboard an aircraft that becomes a medical event is an extremely rare occurrence. Researchers from the FAA Civil Aerospace Medical Institute issued a report in May 2000, titled “The Evaluation of In-flight Medical Care Aboard Selected U.S. Air Carriers: 1996-1997,” based on a survey undertaken by a private medical company that provides in-flight medical care aboard domestic flights on U.S. air carriers. This survey considered 1996-1997, data on passenger and crew medical events, covering approximately 20 percent of U.S. airline passengers. The study showed that 2.4 percent of the in-flight medical events were allergic reaction medical events and there were no deaths associated with these events. The report is available at:

https://www.faa.gov/data_research/research/med_humanfacs/oamtechreports/2000s/media/00_13.pdf

A more recent study conducted in May 2013, by the National Institutes of Health reported similar results.¹ The study reviewed in-flight emergencies reported by five domestic and international airlines from January 1, 2008, through October 31, 2010. It found that of the 11,920 medical emergencies reported by those airlines, only 2.2 percent were due to allergic reactions with no deaths associated with these events.

There are currently no regulations or statutes that require airlines to report to the FAA about allergic reaction events on aircraft. Additionally, the FAA does not track any reports it might receive about such events. To require commercial airlines to report on these medical events would involve rulemaking and technological investments, and impose additional costs on the carriers to monitor these events.

With respect to FAA regulations and guidance, information on management of passengers who may be sensitive to allergens, Emergency Medical Kit contents, and crewmember training regarding the handling of medical events on aircraft is provided in:

- 14 CFR Part 121 Appendix A
- 14 CFR Part 121 Subpart X—Emergency Medical Equipment and Training
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We have sent similar letters to Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger.

Sincerely,



Daniel K. Elwell
Acting Administrator

¹ Titled "Outcomes of Medical Emergencies on Commercial Airline Flights."
https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMoa1212052?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3dwww.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov



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The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman:

House Report 114-606, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2017; and House Report 115-237, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2018; and House Report 115-750, accompanying the Departments of Transportation, and Housing And Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2019, request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) review current policies concerning reporting and data collection standards for severe allergic reactions aboard aircraft. The Joint Explanatory Statements accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, (“Act”), Pub. L. 115-31, direct the FAA to submit the results of the review to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations no later than 180 days after enactment of the Act. The FAA is pleased to provide in this letter the following report on allergic reactions aboard aircraft.

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We have sent similar letters to Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy.

Sincerely,



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The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice Chairman Leahy:

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We have sent similar letters to Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger.

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The Honorable Kay Granger
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Granger:

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